

The Mountain Katydid *Acripeza reticulata* (Orthoptera): a tourist to Wilsons Promontory, Victoria?

Introduction

The Mountain Katydid (sometimes, but less properly, known as the Mountain Grasshopper) *Acripeza reticulata* Guerin (Tettigoniidae, Phaneropterinae) is one of the more distinctive endemic Orthoptera in Australia, and can not be confused easily with any other species. Males are fully winged, and females flightless with shortened tegmina and no hind wings. Both sexes are dark grey to black, with the abdomen ringed with dorsal bands of bright blue and red (or orange) that are exposed by raising the wings if the insect is disturbed. *Acripeza* is thus highly aposematic, and is characteristically alpine or subalpine, and widespread in the southern alps (Rentz 1996), where it can be locally common in summer, usually conspicuous on the ground or low vegetation. However, Rentz noted that lowland populations of *Acripeza* are known from near Nyngan (New South Wales) and Moonie (southern Queensland). Green and Osborne (1994) noted that, although *Acripeza* occurs above the treeline in Tasmania, it is common only in the lower subalpine zones on the mainland mountains, and extends as far as 'the plains towards Broken Hill'.

In this note, the finding of a living female of *A. reticulata* in Wilsons Promontory National Park, southern Victoria, is reported, representing a considerable outlier from the previously recorded range of the species.

Victorian distribution

Acripeza is distributed widely in Victoria's alpine and subalpine zones. The Museum Victoria Orthoptera collection includes specimens of *Acripeza* from the following localities: Mt Bogong, Mt Hotham, Corryong, Whisky Flat, Mt Buller, Mt Skene, Mt McKay. However, and more intriguingly, there are also individual specimens from three more southerly localities (presumed approximate coordinates not on data labels have been inserted by me), as follows: Lcrderderg Gorge (37° 33'S, 144° 24'E), Warrnambool (38°

23'S, 142° 30'E), and Mt Sabene (sic) (presumed Mt Sabine, 38° 38'S, 143° 44'E).

New record

Victoria, Wilsons Promontory National Park, 38° 54'S, 146° 15'E, sandy heathland, on ground, 1?, 21 February 2006, L. Murray.

The capture site, some 150 m west of the main north-south road to Tidal River, was in an open sandy dune-swale system with sporadic *Leptospermum laevigatum* cover, open understorey and much near-bare ground. The insect was photographed alive and, with permission of Parks Victoria staff, retained as a voucher to be deposited in Museum Victoria.

Discussion

The origin of this specimen is unclear. It seems highly improbable that such a conspicuous insect would have escaped earlier notice on Wilsons Promontory if a resident population occurs there. The alternative option is that it was transported there in a vehicle, with one of the vehicles from La Trobe University present at the time of discovery the most likely candidate. This vehicle had been used for fieldwork in the Victorian alps from 13-17 February, including visits to Mt Hotham (1600 m, 15 February) and Mt Sarah (1550 m, 16-17 February). It had then been returned to Melbourne, the interior emptied and vacuumed and the outside washed, before it was driven to Tidal River on 19 February, and to various sites on the Promontory over the following days. The clear implication is that the *Acripeza* could have entered the car during the previous week and escaped detection during cleaning, repacking and again emptying the vehicle and eventually left the car at the site of discovery. The insect was discovered about 60 m from the nearest vehicle, about 45 minutes after arrival at the site.

Further searches will be made to determine whether a resident population exists. However, even if introduced as above, the

female was alive, active and apparently healthy when found and the possibility cannot be dismissed that it could have been a successful colonist. For the present, this intriguing record is best treated as an isolated stowaway individual, but it demonstrates the ease with which such inadvertent introductions may be made and the care needed to prevent them. In this case, the projected scenario entails the insect being in the vehicle, eluding deliberate sanitation and repeated use, for a period of (probably) some six days, and transport over some 600 km (Hotham-Melbourne, Melbourne-Tidal River, subsequent trips).

Nevertheless, the incidence of the other southern Victoria specimens listed above leaves the possibility of a more natural occurrence of the species on Wilsons Promontory, and the precise locality is thus not advertised here. The purpose of this

note is to alert entomological visitors to this possibility, in the hope that further specimens of this striking orthopteran may indeed be found.

Acknowledgements

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References

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TR New

Department of Zoology,
La Trobe University, Victoria 3086
Email: T.New@latrobe.edu.au

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